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C O N F I D E N T I A L LILONGWE 000103

SIPDIS

DEPT PLEASE PASS TO USTR

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/10/2014

TAGS: ETRD MI WTRO

SUBJECT: GOM REACTS TO USTR LETTER WITH TEMPERED ENTHUSIASM

REF: STATE 6662

Classified By: Pol/Econ Officer Marc Dillard for reasons 1.5 b/d.

¶1. (C) Minister of Commerce and Industry Sam Mpasu told the Ambassador during a January 27 meeting that he had been "bowled over" by reftel letter from USTR Zoellick and that he was "very excited" by its prospects. Before the letter, he stated, "We had developed a perception that the developed countries did not want us to have a significant slice of world trade... We left Cancun thinking there was no hope."

¶2. (C) Describing Cancun, Mpasu stated that he had found Pascal Lamy's negotiating posture "arrogant." He expressed the hope that the EU would "take a cue" from the U.S., adding that the GOM would like to see major breakthroughs in WTO negotiations before Hong Kong.

¶3. (C) Mpasu somewhat identified Malawi with the G-20 group, stating that "we" have "a funny set-up, not a permanent coalition," and he distanced Malawi from some of the group's thinking, particularly on sugar. On the Singapore issues, he rhetorically asked why developing countries should talk about them when their concern is agriculture, and he pointedly stated that, given its direction, "we were better off with a failed Cancun."

¶4. (C) Comment: Mpasu was enthusiastic about another chance for the WTO, but he has an economic nationalist streak and is not yet a convert to U.S. thinking. He will assess any new WTO negotiations by what they offer in terms of reduced developed-world agricultural subsidies, reduced non-tariff barriers for agricultural goods, and technical assistance offered to least-developed countries.

BROWNING